

CLAIMS:

1. A communication network comprising one or more interconnected data switches having I/O ports and at least one virtual port, characterized in that the communication network further comprises means for subjecting said ports to one contention resolution process.
2. The communication network according to claim 1, wherein the at least one virtual port is a virtual input port or a virtual output port.
3. The communication network according to claim 1, wherein the at least one virtual port is an internal virtual port or an external virtual port.
4. The communication network according to claim 1, wherein the at least one virtual port is an addressable virtual port.
5. The communication network according to claim 1, wherein the at least one virtual port is coupled to at least one resource.
6. The communication network according to claim 5, wherein the at least one resource is an internal or external resource.
7. The communication network according to claim 6, wherein the at least one resource comprises one or more of the following means: means for testing, means for debugging, means for programming, means for configuring.
8. The communication network according to claim 7, wherein the at least one resource are means for one of the associated data switches.
9. A data switch for application in the communication network according to claim 1, the communication network comprising one or more interconnected data switches

having I/O ports and at least one virtual port, characterized in that the communication network further comprises means for subjecting all said ports to one contention resolution process.

- 5 10. A contention resolution method, characterized in that the method involves contention resolution covering ports of at least one data switch having I/O ports and at least one virtual port.